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ABSTRACT

This document presents a description of the process of governance and decisionmaking at Evergreen State University. The system: (1) calls for the continuous flow of information and for the effective keeping of necessary records; (2) provides for getting the work done and for making decisions where the action is; (3) allows for creative policy making, including a policy initiation process open to any member of the Evergreen community; (4) insists on the speedy adjudication of disputes with built-in guarantees of due process for the individual; (5) has built-in methods for evaluating and, if necessary, changing the system; and (6) attempts in every instance to emphasize the sense of community and to require members of the community to play multiple, reciprocal, and reinforcing roles in the community enterprise. (Author/HS)

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GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING AT EVERGREEN

Committee on Governance

The Evergreen State College

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GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING AT EVERGREEN

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction . . . . . Page 1

The Legal Nature & Status of the College . . . . . Page 2

Information, Communications and Record-Keeping . . . Page 3

The Information and Communications Center . . . . Page 3

The College Forum . . . . . Page 3

The College Sounding Board . . . . . Page 4

Patterns of Administrative Decision-Making . . . . . Page 4

Locatability . . . . . Page 4

Administrative Evaluation and Accountability . . Page 5

Consultation, Input and Advice . . . . . Page 5

The Natural Consultative Pool . . . . . Page 5

The Community Service List . . . . . Page 5

The Voluntary Service List . . . . . Page 6

Initiative Processes . . . . . Page 6

Adjudication of Disputes, Grievances and Appeals . . Page 6

All Campus Hearing Board . . . . . Page 7

Evaluation of Governance . . . . . Page 8

Conclusion . . . . . Page 8

GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING AT EVERGREEN

INTRODUCTION:

Evergreen is an institution in process. It is also a community in the process of organizing itself so that it can work toward clearing away obstacles to learning. In order that both the creative and the routine work of the community can be focused on education, and so the mutual and reciprocal roles of the various members of the community can best reflect the goals and purposes of the College, a system of governance and decision-making consonant with those goals and purposes is required.

To accomplish these ends, governance and decision-making in the Evergreen community must have the following qualities:

1. The procedures must reflect the Evergreen approaches to facilitating learning, and recognize the responsibility of the President and the Board of Trustees for institutional direction.

2. "What to do" and "how to do it" should be decided "where the action is", that is, at the administrative level closest to those affected by a particular decision.

3. "Where the action is" should be locatable.

4. All people responsible for deciding "what to do" should be accountable.

5. "What to do" and "how to do it" should be decided after consultation and coordination. Who is to be consulted, and what is to be coordinated are part of the definition of "where the action is".

6. Consultation and coordination should be:
   a. primarily concerned with substantive issues;
   b. normally involving people who are affected by and interested in the issues.

7. Oligarchies are to be avoided.

8. In the Evergreen community, individuals should not feel intimidated or be subject to reprisal for what they say.

9. In cases of conflict, due process procedures must be available.

10. The procedures must respond automatically to growth and be evaluated periodically.

Governance and decision-making in the Evergreen community must not:

1. Separate the Evergreen community into constituencies with some sort of traditional representative form of government.

2. Require decisions by vote.

3. Call for standing committees and councils.

4. Stifle experimentation with new and better ways to achieve Evergreen's goals.

The following system, designed to accomplish these objectives:

1. Calls for the continuous flow of information and for the effective keeping of necessary records.

2. Provides for getting the work done and for making decisions where the action is.

3. Allows for creative policy making, including a policy initiation process open to any member of the Evergreen community.

4. Insists on the speedy adjudication of disputes with built-in guarantees of due process for the individual.

5. Has built-in methods for evaluating -- and if necessary, changing -- the system.

6. Attempts, in every instance, to emphasize the sense of community and to require members of the community to play multiple, reciprocal, and reinforcing roles in the community enterprise.

I. THE LEGAL NATURE AND STATUS OF THE EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE

The Evergreen State College, established in Thurston County by the 1967 Washington State Legislature, operates under the provision of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW 28B.40). Management of the College, care and preservation of its property, erection and construction of necessary buildings and other facilities, and authority to control collection and disbursement of funds is vested in a five-member Board of Trustees appointed by the Governor with the consent of the Senate for six-year overlapping terms. Board members serve without compensation. Evergreen's president is chosen by and is directly responsible to the Board of Trustees for executive direction and supervision of all operations of the College. The Trustees and the president in turn delegate many duties and responsibilities to others in the Evergreen community. The governance system of Evergreen recognizes the legal nature and status of the College as well as the de facto system whereby the community works toward achieving its goals and purposes.

The president may delegate responsibility and authority to the vice presidents. They in turn may delegate duties to deans and directors, etc. The essential business of the community -- to foster learning -- is the responsibility of everyone in the community, and cannot be delegated.

II. INFORMATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND RECORD-KEEPING

The Evergreen community needs to be open, self-conscious and self-correcting if it is to be both viable and innovative. The left hand does need to know what the right hand is doing. Furthermore,Evergeen needs to be able to remember the important things both its left and right hands have done, and with what degree of success or failure they have done it. This latter function calls for an effective system of record-keeping and is integral to institutional evaluation. The former requires the establishment of an Information and Communications Center designed to provide the intelligence that all members of the community need on a day-to-day, week-to-week, and month-to-month basis. This center should receive the necessary input and provide the necessary output so that anyone can find out what has been going on, what is going on, and what will be going on at Evergreen. Combined with the College Forum and the College Sounding Board, the Information and Communications Center should prove invaluable as an aid to informed decision-making.

A. The Information and Communications Center

This center should become the clearinghouse for all of the information needed to keep the Evergreen enterprise going. It should publish the college newsletter, the college calendar, etc. It should develop a central communications room where anyone can find out who is doing what, where, and why. It should work closely with the schedules desk and the Office of College Relations. It should be a place where people call to schedule meetings. Such kinds of functions should go a long way toward diminishing conflicting calendars, reducing the indiscriminate flow of memos, and providing the necessary communication for coordinated community action.

The Information and Communications Center should be developed with all segments of the College cooperating in its establishment and operation. It may be tied in to the campus computer network, the television network, etc.

The Center can serve to coordinate imaginative record-keeping procedures for developing a continuing chronicle of the Evergreen experiment. It can also play an important role in helping individuals or groups to locate responsible and accountable people on campus when problems need to be solved.

B. The College Forum

As an occasion for all concerned members of the Evergreen community to come together; to think together; to talk, listen, and reason together, the College Forum will meet regularly.

The president of the College will lead the Forum discussions. He will be responsible for preparing and publishing an agenda, but it is to be understood that the agenda is open-ended. The Forum is not a decision-making body. It is a place and a time and a gathering where hard questions can be asked, where dreams can be told, where plans for a better college may first see the light of day.

In addition to the College Forum, similar forums led by vice presidents, deans and directors, etc., are encouraged. These forums may allow for more focused discussion in specific problem areas of the community enterprise.

C. The College Sounding Board

As an important all-campus information and coordination body, the College Sounding Board will meet on a regular schedule to facilitate coordination of activities among all areas of the Evergreen community. This group will not be vested with binding decision-making powers, but it will constitute a consultative pool or "sounding board" where discussion and advice on issues affecting various areas in the College can be heard, and needs for coordination can be aired.

The membership will be constituted as follows:

1. The president will be a member of the Sounding Board.

2. Each vice president will appoint no more than 10 persons from his area of responsibility as members of this body.

3. Ten students will regularly serve as members of this body.

The students will serve as facilitators to all members of the Evergreen community in areas of initiative petitions or proposals, help individuals locate where the action is, and otherwise facilitate communication and coordination on campus. They will be selected by their fellow students in a manner to be determined by the students.

Every member of the Sounding Board should serve in this facilitating role, and participation on the Board should serve to acquaint its members with the multitude of problems, decisions, plans, etc., that typify an active center for learning. Each member of the Board must arrange for a substitute if he or she is to absent from any particular meeting.

The College Sounding Board will select a moderator and a recorder for a limited term. These responsibilities will be rotated through the Board membership. The moderator will see that the group meets on a regular schedule, will prepare and publish an open-ended agenda for each meeting, and will assure a free and open discussion of the issues. The recorder will be responsible for reporting the issues discussed.

III. GETTING THE COLLEGE'S WORK DONE: PATTERNS OF ADMINISTRATIVE DECISION-MAKING

Decision-making at Evergreen will take place "where the action is", that is, at the administrative level closest to those affected by the particular decision. Those responsible for making the decisions will be locatable and accountable; they will be expected to obtain input and advice from concerned parties as a regular part of the decision-making process.

A. Locatability:

Location of those responsible for the functioning of various areas of the community is identified in the College organizational chart, the Faculty Handbook, and the Business Policies and Procedures Manual. Delegated duties and responsibilities should be made as explicit as possible, and information

regarding the decision-making roles of various members of the Evergreen community should be made easily available in the College Information and Communications Center. Members of the College Sounding Board will also serve as information sources on these questions of locatability.

B. Administrative Evaluation and Accountability:

Accountability for decisions made or not made, and the degree to which those affected have been encouraged to make inputs into the decision-making process, will be reflected in the College's system of administrative evaluation. Like the student and the faculty evaluation procedures, the administrative evaluation will emphasize growth in learning how to perform more effectively the roles for which the individual is responsible. The procedure will include a large element of self-evaluation and evaluation by peers, but must also include clear opportunities for input by those other members of the College community who experience the results of the administrative processes. It is through this evaluative procedure that the community can express itself most constructively on the effectiveness of the administrative process and the degree to which it is being responsive to the needs and the long-term interests of that community. Without a smoothly functioning procedure encouraging evaluative contributions from a wide circle of community opinion concerning the administrative performance of the decision-makers in the College, the campus community cannot be expected to place its confidence in the system of governance elaborated here. Administrative evaluation is therefore central and essential to the workability of the governance pattern proposed. The details of the evaluation system are contained in the separate document prepared by the Disappearing Task Force on Evaluation of Administration which, in turn, is dependent upon the full support and backing of the president and the vice presidents for its effective and successful operation.

C. Consultation, Input, and Advice:

The Evergreen State College wishes to avoid the usual patterns of extensive standing committees and governing councils. Instead, decisions will be made by the person to whom the responsibility is delegated, after appropriate consultation.

At least three major avenues for consultation and advice are open to a decision-maker within the College, depending upon personal style and the scope of the problem. The person may wish to: (1) simply solicit advice on a direct and personal basis; (2) select a Disappearing Task Force (ad hoc committee) for the purpose of gathering information, preparing position papers, proposing policy, or offering advice; (3) appoint a longer term advisory body for counsel on a matter requiring expertise (this option should be used infrequently to avoid the "standing committee syndrome").

Three major resources exist for selection to these consultative processes:

1. The Natural Consultative Pool - Certain decisions have an effect only on a limited number of persons who are easily identifiable.

2. The Community Service List - All members of the Evergreen community will be eligible for selection to the list by a random selection process.

Names will be drawn from the list following the random order in which they were selected. Service on the list is considered a responsibility and a privilege of membership in the Evergreen community.

3. The Voluntary Service List - In addition to the Community Service List an Evergreen Voluntary Service List will be compiled by the computer center. Any member of the Evergreen community may have his name added to the list, and if he so desires may specify certain interest areas where he would wish to serve (e.g., Bookstore, DTFs dealing with experimental housing, administrative service, sports, etc.). This list will be available through the Information and Communications Center. Any individual or group can use this list to locate individuals to serve on DTFs, to identify people with certain interests, or to find talent and expertise. Those placing their names, interest areas, etc., on this list will have entree into the governance process in ways not immediately provided by the Community Service List. The College is advised to experiment with all aspects of the service list concept. It may prove to be an important innovation in the campus governance system.

IV. INITIATIVE PROCESSES

In addition to those who by law or by delegation of duties and responsibilities are charged to develop policy in the performance of their duties, any member of the Evergreen community can write a proposal, gather together a disappearing task force to develop a proposition, or present a petition. The appropriate administrative officer will be obliged to read and act upon such proposals at the earliest possible time after receipt of said proposals in finished form. If accepted by the appropriate authority, the proposal will become official Evergreen policy and will appear in the next Evergreen Bulletin, Faculty Handbook, Business Policies and Procedures Manual, or other official Evergreen documents. Proposals not accepted will be returned to their initiators along with the reasons for rejection.

Aid and advice on the initiative process will be available to individuals and groups from members of the College Sounding Board as well as from the Information and Communications Center.

DTFs or other consultative bodies can be formed in the same manner as indicated in Section III, C of this document.

V. ADJUDICATION OF DISPUTES, GRIEVANCES, AND APPEALS

The grievances and appeals system at The Evergreen State College is designed to:

1. Reflect the programs and character of the institution and apply to all members of the community.

2. Provide a working system where appeals can be heard in the least possible time; one that is capable of speedy resolution of conflict and grievances.

3. Provide a <u>campus</u> adjudicatory apparatus, not one intended to operate in place of civil authority.

The appeals system should be required only when all prior attempts to resolve disputes and grievances "where the action is" have failed. All members of the Evergreen community should feel a heavy responsibility to make every effort to solve individual and community problems imaginatively and constructively without resort to this system.

In the event that satisfactory resolution of disputes or grievances is not achieved, or in cases of appeal for infraction of the code of conduct, the following procedure will be employed:

1. It will be the responsibility of the individual or individuals affected to initiate the process.

2. The first step will be written notification of an appropriate facilitator (a member of the Sounding Board or others as selected) regarding the dispute or grievance. This notification should include all necessary details about the dispute. The facilitator will establish that appropriate prior attempts at resolution have been made. He will then forward the written grievance to the appropriate person or office (coordinator, dean, director, vice president, or president).

3. The appropriate person or office will notify the individual or individuals involved of a time and place for a hearing. (This hearing must take place within one week of notification of dispute.)

4. The hearing board will be constituted in the following way:
   a. The board will consist of five members.
   b. Members will be selected from the Community Service List.
   c. The hearing board will reflect the peer groups of the disputants.
   d. The members will be selected by a random number process from identified peer groups.
   e. Each side represented in a dispute will have the right of two peremptory challenges.

5. The decision of the hearing board will be binding on all parties concerned. However, if the sanction imposed by this hearing body involves possible suspension, a fine in excess of $25, an official institutional reprimand which would become a part of the individual's permanent record, or a matter of serious principle, then the decision can be appealed to the All-Campus Hearing Board.

All-Campus Hearing Board

This Board will hear conflicts of a serious nature which are appealed from other hearing boards.

Three members of the Board will be impaneled for a defined period of service. These members will have the authority to review all appeals documents and to decide in advance which cases it will hear. At the time when a case is to be heard, four additional members, representing the peer groups of the disputants, will be selected for each individual case. All Board members will be selected from the Community Service List utilizing variations of the random number/peer group process. Each side represented in a dispute will have the right of two

peremptory challenges. The only appeal within the institution beyond the All-Campus Hearing Board is by petition to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees may also, on its own motion, review any decision of the All-Campus Hearing Board and affirm, modify, or reverse that decision.

In cases heard by the All-Campus Hearing Board, disputants will:

1. Receive adequate (5 to 10 days) written notice of the nature of the grievance and possible sanctions (where appropriate).

2. Receive written notice of the date, time, and place of the hearing.

3. Be advised of the names of the witnesses who will appear in the case.

4. Receive a fair hearing.

5. Have the right to present a defense and witnesses and the right to cross-examine opposing witnesses.

6. Have access to a transcript of the proceedings and the findings of the Board.

VI. EVALUATION OF GOVERNANCE

Necessary and essential amending of this document is to be accomplished through the initiative procedures contained herein. At the end of two years and thereafter every five years, a commission on governance will be convened to evaluate the Evergreen governance system. It will be the responsibility of the commission to affirm the effectiveness of the system or to propose changes. Major changes will be subject to ratification by the members of the Evergreen community.

VII. CONCLUSION

Most contemporary forms of academic governance have taken shape from the faculty struggle for power and from the continuing conflict between faculty and administration. The faculty has clothed its cause in democratic rhetoric, and college presidents have been reluctant to stand against the language of Jefferson. But a public college is not a state. A public college is not a self-governing body politic. It is the educational and initiatory agency of the state. Its work is learning, not self-government.

At Evergreen, we have designed, and hope to perfect, a simple system of academic government that grows out of and meets the needs of the teaching enterprise. We have not used the federal government as a model, and we are not going to use inappropriate political rhetoric. Our organizational, administrative, and policy-formulating structure must reflect our teaching function.

At Evergreen, we assume a community built upon commonality of interest, instead of upon inevitable conflict between irreconcilable interest groups. We assume cooperation between members of a single interest group. Those who come together at Evergreen will do so because they want to, because they want to become fellows.

Evergreen will not be the place for students, faculty, deans, or presidents who function best in overt or covert conflict.

Pressure-group politics is not the way to search for great curricular ideas, and is not the way to run an educational community. Conflict, pressure, non-negotiations, and confrontation politics will not create a fellowship -- war perhaps; maybe a standoff; constituencies certainly; but not a reasonable community.

Evergreen must try to avoid a labyrinth of college-wide and departmental committees. Instead, proper power, opportunity, authority, and responsibility will be distributed functionally to those groups of faculty and administrators who need it to do the work they must do. This means that the President, Vice President, and deans will set limits -- wide limits -- and the faculty teams will explore widely within those limits. We want to insure maximum administrative support for the widest possible exploration and elaboration of the Evergreen programmatic ideal. We want to provide cooperating teams of faculty with opportunities for the design of better ways of learning. We want to provide for continuous self-study and self-evaluation by students, faculty, and administration; and continuous critical self-study of the entire College. Evergreen is to have a growing, changing, living curriculum, faculty, and administration.

Our system of decision making, evaluation, and appeals has been designed specifically to support the teaching and learning programs peculiar to Evergreen. Though it is the product of months of careful deliberation, it is not intended to stand unchanged for all time. It is a system that is to be tried and evaluated, and it is to be changed for the better on the basis of experiment and experience. This document is subject to review and to change by processes analogous to those which originally created it.

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